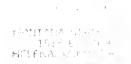# Montana State Trails Plan and Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS)

March 1996

WORKBOOK FOR PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT:

DRAFT TRAILS PLAN AND PEIS ISSUES, GOALS, STRATEGIES, AND ALTERNATIVES

M O N T A N A
STATE PARKS

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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March 5, 1996

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Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
      Director's Office
      Regional Park Managers (6)
      Fisheries Division - Bruce Rehwinkel
      Wildlife Division
      Regional Supervisors
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MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, POB 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202
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Donald Kern, Montana River Action Network, POB 383, 30 N. Last Chance Gulch, Helena, MT 59624

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is coordinating development of an interagency State Trails Plan. Along with the Plan, FWP is working with a consultant to develop a programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) for two of the trail grant programs managed by the Department. The Plan and PEIS are being developed concurrently using the same public involvement process, with assistance from both technical and user group advisory committees.

OVER

The enclosed Trails Plan/PEIS "Workbook" is designed as an intermediate public and agency involvement step, in between the 18 scoping workshops held at the end of 1994, and the meetings which will be held when a draft Plan and PEIS are available. The document is designed in an interactive format to encourage comments and suggestions.

A more detailed description of the general planning process and the Workbook format is included in the document. Comments should be sent to the FWP Parks Division in Helena by Monday, April 22. If you have questions, please call give me a call at 444-3818. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Jeff Erickson
Planner--Parks Division

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INTRODUCTION

This "workbook" includes a preliminary draft for public review of issues, goals, and strategies for possible inclusion in the Montana State Trails Plan. The Trails Plan is the first time that trail managing agencies and users have stepped back to look at Montana's entire, inter-agency trail system and assess how it might be better maintained and improved.

In addition to the Plan material included here, there is also a section addressing preliminary issues and alternatives for the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS), which is being done in conjunction with the Trails Plan. The PEIS is a separate but related document focused on analyzing the impacts of trail grant programs administered by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

Finally, there is a third section in the workbook which briefly discusses some of the larger forces which can not be controlled by the trails planning process, but which need to be considered because of their potential impact on Montana trails.

None of the issues, goals, and strategies included here are agency recommendations at this point; they are only ideas for discussion. The information which finally results from this workbook exercise, however, will form the core of the Trails Plan, and will shape development of the PEIS. The focus in this document is on state-wide, rather than local or trail-specific issues, with a primary emphasis on common values shared by most trail users, and areas of agreement within and between managing agencies and other interested parties. The intent of the Plan is not to usurp the authority of managing agencies, but to make recommendations on issues where there is broad concurrence.

Much of the Plan and PEIS information included here was initially derived from public comments received during the scoping period held in November and December, 1994. A total of 315 written comments were received during the scoping period, and more than 400 people attended one of the 18 public scoping meetings held across Montana.

While not every comment or suggestion from the scoping period could be included here, an effort was made to capture all the major issues and concerns which emerged. The scoping comments were condensed to the 15 major issue areas included here, which are not listed in priority order. The scoping comments were also used to help develop the preliminary issues identified for analysis in the PEIS.

An earlier version of this workbook was reviewed by a group of trail users who serve on the State Trails Advisory Committee (STAC), as well as members of the State Trails Plan Technical Advisory Committee, composed mainly of representatives from the major trail managing agencies (see Appendix for a list of members). Primary trail uses covered by the Plan are similar to those represented on the STAC, as follows:

* Hiking
* Bicycling (traditional)
* Mountain biking
* Cross-country skiing
* Horseback riding
* Off-road motorcycling
* ATV riding
* Back-country 4 wheel drive (4WD) use

The one trail use represented on the STAC which is not included in the Trails Plan is snowmobiling, which was covered under a separate PEIS completed in 1993.
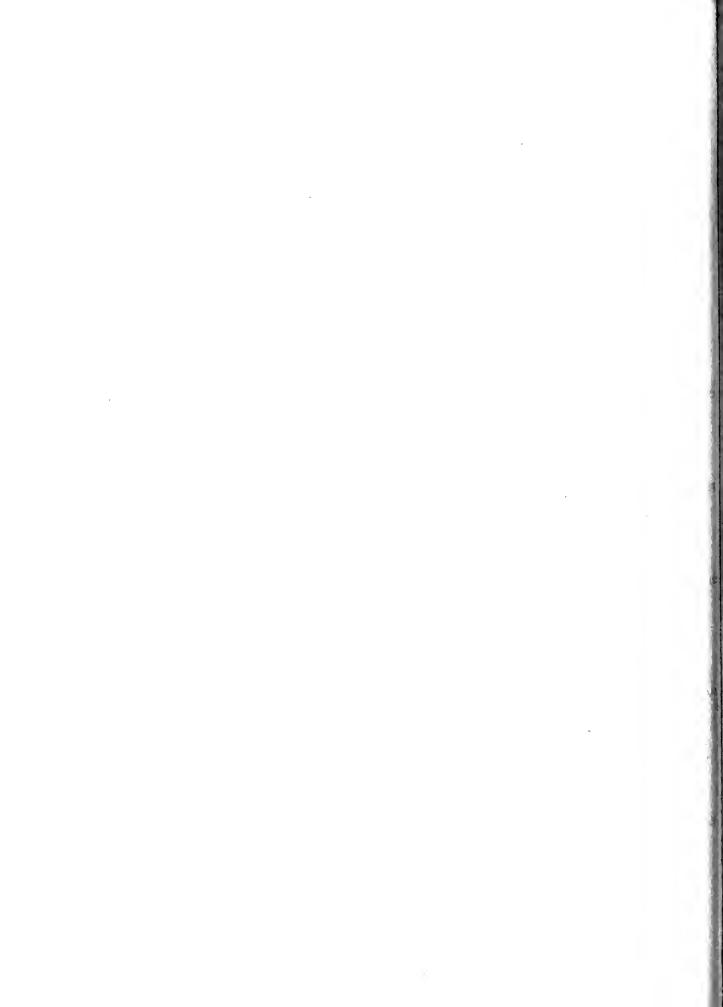
Each issue in the workbook refers to a major trail-related problem or opportunity which emerged during the scoping period. Below each issue, there is a brief explanation and a goal, which is intended to be a general statement about desired results. In addition, alternative strategies are included. The strategies are possible approaches or courses of action that can be used to help resolve the issue and achieve the stated goal. In some cases, similar strategies may appear under different issues. The strategies should be regarded as a menu of options for attacking a particular issue: If you agree on the issue and goal, are these the best methods for proceeding? Are there others? Will some not work? Do you have ideas about how the issues, goals, and strategies should be prioritized? Everything in the workbook is open to review and comment.

In addition to comments on issues, goals, and strategies, reviewers are encouraged to suggest measurable objectives (e.g., maintenance funding should increase by 25% by the year 2000), specific actions (e.g., FWP will produce a Montana Trails Directory, in cooperation with other managing agencies), and timeframes (see Appendix for additional explanation of these terms and a list of acronyms). None of this more detailed information is included in the workbook yet, but the success of the Plan will, in part, be influenced by the specificity of the recommendations and the degree to which there are assigned responsibilities.

The workbook is intended to be an intermediate phase of public involvement, between the scoping period and public meetings which will be held when the draft Plan and PEIS are complete. In addition to changes based on public and agency comment, there will likely be significant modifications as more trail-related research is completed and analyzed for the Plan and PEIS (e.g., state trails inventory, user survey, etc).

This is an opportunity for you to help shape the future direction of <u>your</u> trail system. In order to help us move forward with the process, try to get your comments in no later than <u>Monday, April 22</u>. Comments and suggestions may be written in the spaces included in the document or compiled separately and mailed in, whichever is most convenient. You may also fax in your ideas, or let us know your thoughts over the phone. Comments or questions should be directed to:

Jeff Erickson
Parks Division
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1420 E. 6th Ave.
Helena, MT 59620
406-444-3818/FAX: 444-4952

MONTANA STATE TRAILS PLAN:
LIST OF DRAFT PRIORITY PLAN ISSUES

1) <u>ISSUE</u>: ACCESS

2) <u>ISSUE</u>: COMMUNICATION, COORDINATION, INFORMATION, AND EDUCATION

3) <u>ISSUE</u>: MAINTENANCE

4) <u>ISSUE</u>: MANAGEMENT/ENFORCEMENT

5) <u>ISSUE</u>: FUNDING

6) <u>ISSUE</u>: URBAN TRAILS

7) <u>ISSUE</u>: TRAIL SUPPLY AND SYSTEM CONFIGURATION

8) <u>ISSUE</u>: RESOURCE PROTECTION

9) <u>ISSUE</u>: USER COMPATIBILITY

10) <u>ISSUE</u>: RESEARCH, PLANNING, AND DESIGN

11) <u>ISSUE</u>: DISABLED ACCESS/TRAILS FOR ELDERLY

12) <u>ISSUE</u>: TRAILHEADS

13) <u>ISSUE</u>: RAIL-TO-TRAIL AND UTILITY CORRIDOR OPPORTUNITIES

14) <u>ISSUE</u>: LIABILITY AND SAFETY

15) <u>ISSUE</u>: TRANSPORTATION AND TRAILS

NOTE: Issues are not listed in priority order.

COMMENTS?:_____

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MONTANA STATE TRAILS PLAN: DRAFT ISSUES, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES

1) <u>ISSUE</u>: ACCESS

COMMENTS?:_____

<u>GOAL</u>: Work collectively to secure and maintain access to public trails across private property and other lands. Tools could include a mix of education, incentives, leases, purchases, alternative routes, land management plans, legal and policy changes, and other means. More aggressive enforcement of trespass, vandalism, littering, and other violations would help maintain access across private property.

COMMENTS?:_____

<u>EXPLANATION</u>: Access problems were the most frequently mentioned state-wide issue at the Trail Plan scoping meetings. Often, the only access to public trails and other recreational resources is across private land. Unless there is a public road, trail easement, or other means for reaching the public property, the public can be locked out. More aggressive cooperative management and planning between public agencies, non-profit organizations, trail users, and private landholders is necessary to improve access problems. Access difficulties may also occur when different public agencies don't cooperate effectively. Finally, access problems sometimes result from irresponsible behavior on the part of recreational users, which provides a powerful incentive for private property owners to close access.

COMMENTS?:_____

<u>POTENTIAL STRATEGIES</u>:

A) Managing agencies and user groups should identify and map high priority trails which are currently (or likely to become) blocked because of land access problems. Depending on the situation, various alternatives should be identified and evaluated. Particular attention needs to be paid to lower elevation "front" country trails which often provide access to large areas of federally-managed backcountry, and to urban trails and greenways where critical linkages are threatened. Progress should be monitored at both the state-wide and local levels, and reported annually.

COMMENTS?:_____

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B) Agency staff, trail user groups, private property owners, and other interests should work together to develop better information about access issues. The information should be compiled in one or more publications, or added to existing brochures (e.g., "Montana Access Guide to Federal and State Lands"). Areas where potential information gaps exist include the following:

> 1) Develop a notebook describing and defining various types of access, and the means for ensuring access rights where current access is inadequate. The notebook should recommend specific changes and improvements (e.g., legal, agency policies, plans, etc.) which should be pursued to improve access.

> As an element of the above, a range of incentives should be developed which can be offered to private landowners to encourage them to provide trail access. The information should include general and agency-specific guidelines, as well as contact names and numbers.

> 2) Develop an information package for landowners and managers which discusses liability and other issues associated with permitting access across their land. Many landowners and agency staff may have an inaccurate understanding of liability risk and other issues associated with access.

> 3) Develop better information for the public explaining their responsibilities when legally crossing private land to access a public trail. Landowners are likely to be more receptive towards trail easements if litter, vandalism, and trespassing were less common. Focusing "adopt a trail" clean-up and maintenance efforts along stretches of trail where landowners have granted access may be one way of addressing litter and other problems.

COMMENTS?:_____

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C) Agencies and user groups should work toward securing better funding for purchasing trail easements and rights-of ways (see funding section). Montana trail advocates may want to consider establishing a non-profit foundation specifically dedicated to resolving trail access problems. In some cases, temporary easements may be a way for landowners to test whether they are comfortable granting access on a more permanent basis.

COMMENTS?:_____

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D) Trail managers should work with appropriate staff in resource agencies to continue the process of consolidating small, isolated blocks of public land into more manageable units. It is important that trail interests be represented during land exchange negotiations with private landholders; maintenance of public access must be a primary consideration in evaluating all land exchanges.

COMMENTS?:_____

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E) Local governments in Montana need to work closely with other managing agencies to ensure that local trail systems are connected with surrounding "backcountry" trails on state and federal land. In some cases, non-profit land trusts may be able to provide assistance in securing recreational easements across private lands.

COMMENTS?:_____

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F) Trail managing agencies should consider writing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to facilitate communication and cooperation on access issues. It is advisable that each managing agency have a central contact person for access issues.

COMMENTS?:_____

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G) Agencies, user groups, and other interested parties should work cooperatively to support legislation which limits the liability of landowners along trails.

COMMENTS?:_____

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OTHER STRATEGIES?_____

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MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES, SPECIFIC ACTIONS, AND TIME FRAMES?:

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2) ISSUE: COMMUNICATION, COORDINATION, INFORMATION, AND EDUCATION

COMMENTS?:_____

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GOAL: Work to improve trail-related communication, coordination, and mutual understanding within and between trail managing agencies, trail users, local governments, private landowners, tourism agencies, and other organizations and groups. Agencies need to work to ensure that trail users have access to excellent trail-related information, maps, and signs. Managing agencies and user groups need to work together to continually improve trail ethics and behavior for all types of trail use through education.

COMMENTS?:_____

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EXPLANATION: The need for improved communication and coordination was an issue that was mentioned frequently during the Trails Plan scoping period. Because of the large number of agencies, diverse user groups, and varied issues connected with trails in Montana, good communication and coordination is critical.

Excellent trail-related information, maps, and signs are a key factor shaping user safety and enjoyment of the Montana trail network. If people have a good idea about how to find a trail and what to expect once they get on it (e.g., type of terrain, degree of difficulty, permitted uses, other recreational opportunities, etc.), the chances that they will have a rewarding experience are enhanced. Similarly, an outstanding trail system is of little value if people who otherwise might be interested in using particular trails don't know about them. Trail users also need information about various trail organizations and groups.

It is important that managing agencies and groups work with local governments, chambers of commerce organizations, tourism groups, and policy makers to promote the social and economic benefits of trails. Trails are an important component of Montana's tourism industry, and the benefits they provide need to be documented and discussed, in order to help increase support and funding for trails.

An excellent trail system can have a powerful positive influence on an area's quality of life. Agencies and users can not afford to take for granted that everyone fully understands and appreciates the significant positive impact trails have on the social, economic, and environmental vitality of Montana's cities and regions, and the state as a whole. Managing agencies, user groups, local governments, social and health organizations, and other interested parties need to work more effectively together to ensure that the social and economic benefits of trails are documented, discussed, widely distributed, and publicized.

Managing agencies and user groups should work together to improve trail-related ethics and behavior for all types of trail use through education. Education can be an effective tool to reduce behavior problems, which sometimes result in user conflicts, vandalism, and environmental impacts. At an early age, in particular, education can have an important influence on forming a code of ethics among young trail users which will help reduce conflicts. Where information and education are not effective, improved enforcement may be necessary.

COMMENTS?:_____

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POTENTIAL STRATEGIES:

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION STRATEGIES

A) Trail user organizations need to be routinely updated and educated about the status of Montana's trail system, and the important issues affecting it. Active support from trail users will be required to maintain and improve the system in an era of declining agency budgets.

The State Trails Advisory Committee (STAC) is an existing vehicle which should continue to provide leadership in efforts to improve communication between different trail user groups, and help coordinate the inter-agency implementation of the State Trails Plan. The STAC, or perhaps some other trails organization, should spearhead an effort to organize a state-wide coalition of trail user groups to become actively involved in helping agencies improve the trail systems they manage. The STAC needs to continue informing local groups about trail issues of state and national importance, and involve them in campaigning for improved trails funding. Use of the Internet and other emerging technologies might also be a useful way to inform people about Montana trail issues.

The State Trails Newsletter and Trails Conference are additional avenues for exchanging Montana trail information between groups. These tools should be maintained, nurtured, and enhanced.

COMMENTS?:_____

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B) Communication within and between agencies is especially important where trails cross agency or regional boundaries. Managing agencies should strive to provide users with seamless and coherent trail experiences which are not disrupted by administrative boundaries. Agencies may want to establish a committee to look at establishing more standardization in trail design, signing, maintenance, regulations, and management throughout the state.

COMMENTS?:_____

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C) Capturing input from area residents, businesses, trail users, affected local governments, and other organizations is an important part of trail planning and management. Managing agencies should continually work to refine and expand their trails-related public involvement skills, and select techniques appropriate for each situation. Involvement processes should be designed to solicit public input in a meaningful way, rather than merely meet minimum legal requirements.

COMMENTS?:_____

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D) The STAC and trail managing agencies should continue to help organize and nurture trail user groups which are either non-existent or poorly organized in Montana (e.g., hikers). Local and regional groups are important vehicles for monitoring trail issues in an area, and provide an organized body that managing agencies can work with, rather than trying to communicate exclusively with a diffuse collection of individuals. An additional advantage of local groups is that they are a useful for organizing volunteers. A state-wide collection of regional trail coalitions could help resolve conflicts, establish local priorities, and otherwise work towards improving trails in their area.

COMMENTS?:_____

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E) Trail managing agencies and user groups should work together to better utilize State School Trust lands for trail access and trail uses. Managing agencies need to also work closely with tribal governments on trail issues. Additionally, agencies need to work closely with private providers of trails. While a very small percentage of the overall trail system, privately owned and operated trails need to be considered as part of Montana's overall recreation picture.

COMMENTS?:_____

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MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES, SPECIFIC ACTIONS, AND TIME FRAMES?:

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OTHER STRATEGIES?_____

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INFORMATION STRATEGIES

A) Produce and periodically update a comprehensive directory on trail organizations, groups, and managing agencies. The directory should include contact names, addresses, and phone numbers; it would be a source people could turn to when they need more information about Montana trails and trail-related matters, including how to volunteer. The directory, or some other related publication, could also contain basic contact information about who local trail groups should consult when they are interested in working to establish a trail, perhaps with some basic guidelines on how to get started. The directory could be published on a periodic basis as part of the State Trails Newsletter, or distributed in some other manner.

COMMENTS?:_____

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B) Managing agencies at all levels of government should strive to produce accurate maps of every trail or trail system; information about how to find trailheads is also important. All maps should be dated so that users know how current the information is. In addition, managing agencies should consider the following:

1) To the extent possible, managing agencies and especially regions within the same agencies should strive to produce consistent, standardized maps and other trail information (e.g., similar map symbols, terminology, etc.) to avoid confusing trail users. Agencies should make sure that all marked trails exist as indicated.

2) Work to ensure that a map of the trail or trail system is posted at major, high-use trailheads, along with other pertinent information (e.g., closures, hazards, degree of difficulty, additional recreation opportunities, etc.).

3) Managing agencies should work to improve the extent to which property boundaries and private lands are identified on maps and along trails. In order to reduce trespassing and other private property impacts, trail users need to know where public-private boundaries are located.

COMMENTS?:_____

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C) Agencies, user groups, and tourism officials should work to improve information and maps for types of trail activities which have a relative lack good material available. Horseback riding, bicycling, cross-country skiing, ATV riding, off-road motorcycling, and 4WD use, in particular, are activities which should be considered for improved information. Currently, people can plan backroad 4WD trips, for example, using USFS travel plans and other agency maps, but there is a lack of more general state-wide information. There may be a possibility of involving the private sector in some of these information efforts.

COMMENTS?:_____

D) Work to utilize new technology such as the Internet to provide information for trail users. An additional venue is a new system of computerized, tourism information video kiosks being developed by Travel Montana. The system has the capability of quickly providing a wide range of information about various recreation opportunities and tourist attractions, including maps, photos, descriptions, and other attributes. The kiosks will be located at key tourist information centers around the state.

COMMENTS?:_____

E) Trail users expressed a strong interest in improved trail signing during the Plan scoping process. Some of the sign-related issues trail users would like to see addressed include the following:

1) Better signs along roads marking trailhead locations.

2) More consistent, standardized signs.

3) Improved interpretive signing.

4) Include mileage, closures, permitted uses, and degree of difficulty on trailhead signs.

5) Improved sign maintenance.

6) A rating system indicating degree of difficulty on trailhead signs.

7) Agencies might explore working with high school shop classes or volunteer groups to produce certain types of signs. In particular, working with high school students in areas where there are sign vandalism problems could be a way of helping make young people more aware of this issue.

8) Managing agencies need to make an effort to raise the consciousness among staff about the importance of both urban and backcountry trail signs, and the need to routinely evaluate the adequacy and condition of signs when they visit sites. Similarly, users need to contact agency personnel when they see inadequate or damaged signs, or have suggestions about new signing needs.

COMMENTS?:_____

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F) Trail managing agencies need to work closely with Travel Montana and the various "tourism countries" to ensure that trail information in tourist publications is accurate and regularly updated. Managing agencies and tourism officials can cooperatively use tourism information as a management tool (e.g., ensuring that heavily-used or environmentally sensitive trails are not overpromoted). Highway rest areas and tourist information centers are other places where information on trails could be made more widely available.

COMMENTS?:_____

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G) Managing agencies, tourism organizations, and user groups should consider jointly producing and funding more trail-related maps and information materials to reduce redundancy, increase efficiency, and improve quality.

COMMENTS?:_____

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H) Trail managers need to work more closely with local governments, social and health organizations, tourism offices, and chambers of commerce to increase awareness of the important economic and social roles urban and backcountry trails play in many areas. Managers and advocates alike need to do a better job of marketing why trails are important, and why they deserve adequate levels of funding and support. The STAC, FWP, and other managing agencies should continue to use the State Trails Newsletter, the annual Trails Conference, and National Trails Day as forums for increasing awareness about the positive impact trails have on the quality of life and economy in Montana. More active, broad-based citizen and political support for Montana's urban and backcountry trails would be a powerful force for expanding and improving the system.

COMMENTS?:_____

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MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES, SPECIFIC ACTIONS, AND TIME FRAMES?:

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OTHER STRATEGIES?_____

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EDUCATION STRATEGIES

A) Establish a committee with a diversity of representation to review existing information and education programs to determine gaps, overlaps, and recommend improvements and

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ways to standardize the information. Topical areas to look at should include (but not necessarily be limited to) the following: backcountry and urban trail safety education; low impact trail use; weed education; vandalism; access issues; reducing conflicts on multiple use trails; "rules of the trail" information; bears and other wildlife; proper human waste disposal; and trail courtesy. In some cases, well-developed existing information programs (e.g., "Leave No Trace" and "Tread Lightly") might be adopted by agencies which don't have programs. Courses on some of these topics are already available through facilities such as the USFS Ninemile Wildlands Training Center. Opportunities for coordination and cooperation should be explored; having several partners share education funding costs is an excellent way to demonstrate cooperation and produce better material more efficiently.

COMMENTS?:_____

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B) Trail managing agencies should develop systematic methods to track areas which have high levels of behavior-related complaints and problems, and target them for additional educational materials at trailheads and other appropriate locations.

COMMENTS?:_____

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C) Trail managing agencies should work closely with clubs, schools, and other groups and organizations interested in trails to promote good trail behavior through education. Staff should work to integrate trail information (e.g., trail ethics, courtesy, etc.) into other natural resource education programs. National Trails Day provides a useful vehicle for various trail-related educational programs.

COMMENTS?:_____

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MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES, SPECIFIC ACTIONS, AND TIME FRAMES?:

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OTHER STRATEGIES?_____

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3) <u>ISSUE</u>: MAINTENANCE

<u>COMMENTS?</u>:_____

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<u>GOAL</u>: Work cooperatively to ensure that Montana's trail system is maintained in a safe, attractive, and environmentally sound manner, with no net loss of mileage due to lack of maintenance. Maintenance levels should be appropriate to the amount and type of use the site receives.

<u>COMMENTS?</u>:_____

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<u>EXPLANATION</u>: Government funding to maintain the current network of trails is not sufficient. In Montana's National Forests, for example, one result of inadequate budgets has been the loss and abandonment of many trails, and an accumulation of a $40 million backlog of needed rehabilitation work on existing trails. Because it is doubtful that traditional sources of maintenance funding can be significantly increased at any level of government--or even maintained at current levels, in some cases--the long-term viability of Montana's trail system depends upon finding alternative solutions to trail maintenance problems. During the next decade, maintaining the current Montana trail system will be one of the biggest challenges facing users and managing agencies.

<u>COMMENTS?</u>:_____

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<u>POTENTIAL STRATEGIES</u>:

A) Use volunteers more effectively in maintenance activities. Suggested ways to accomplish this are as follows:

1) Compile a booklet which lists organizations with an interest in trail-related volunteer work.

2) Promote, publicize, and reward volunteerism more actively. An inter-agency newsletter, or regular column in the State Trails Newsletter on volunteerism, are two ways to publicize successful volunteer projects and generate more interest in volunteering. A television promotional piece by the Governor praising trail volunteers and explaining their value might be worth pursuing; there is also an annual Governor's Conference on Community Service and Volunteerism which agencies and trail groups might want to actively participate in. An occasional article on volunteer trail projects in <u>Montana Outdoors</u> and other publications would be useful, possibly timed to coordinate with National Trails Day. In addition, more programs on

volunteerism at the State Trails conference would be helpful, along with an award program for outstanding volunteers.

3) Produce educational material which includes information on diminishing federal trail maintenance budgets, and how volunteers can work to partially offset these declines.

4) Work to ensure that all trail managing agencies have staff who are knowledgeable about volunteer issues, and have the leadership skills to effectively manage volunteers. Consider joint funding for an inter-agency volunteer coordinator position, which would promote volunteer trail activities throughout the state, and at all levels of government. A non-profit organization established to coordinate volunteer efforts between the agencies and user groups might be another option. Periodic training workshops for volunteer coordinators would be useful; agencies might want to jointly develop a standardized training curriculum and reference material package, and award a certificate of completion for agency staff and others who complete the course. The STAC may be able to help initiate some of the state-wide volunteer activities. A concise booklet about how to use volunteers effectively could help local governments, in particular, tap into this resource.

5) Identify user groups who are not actively participating in volunteer trail maintenance and target them for information material. It is important that all major trail user groups participate actively in volunteer programs. Programs which use integrated teams of various types of trail users are good vehicles for establishing a sense of commonality among recreationists with different interests.

6) Promote "adopt-a-trail" programs more widely. Under this approach, an individual or group assume responsibility for specific maintenance tasks along a particular trail segment. Adopt-a-highway programs have been very successful in many states; this concept has the potential to be more widely used for trails.

7) Address insurance and liability issues involving volunteer maintenance activities.

COMMENTS?:_____

B) The Montana State Trails Advisory Committee (STAC), along with the State Trails Coordinator, should continue to act as catalysts to push for and explore innovative and improved funding sources at the federal, state, and local levels. Trail users need to be regularly informed about funding shortfalls, potential new funding sources, and ways to become involved in the effort to maintain and improve trails funding.

COMMENTS?:_____

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C) Because trail design can have a powerful impact on future maintenance, all trail managing agencies should have access to a bibliography of publications on trail design. A collection of videos on trail construction and maintenance would be helpful too, particularly for briefing volunteers on proper maintenance techniques, trail location guidelines, and other topics. Agencies may want to work together to produce videos which fill information gaps in their programs. A well-designed trail may cost more initially, but could save many thousands of dollars in long-term maintenance and liability costs. Good information about urban trail design and maintenance is especially important because of the complexity of routing and maintaining trails in heavily populated areas.

COMMENTS?:_____

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D) Each trail managing agency should ensure that work along or around trails (e.g., timber harvesting, road building and repair, etc.) does not result in long-term damage. Avoiding impacting trails in the first place is preferable. Repair and enhancement of trails to specified standards should be stipulated as part of all relevant permits, when damage is unavoidable.

COMMENTS?:_____

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E) Agencies should try to repair vandalized signs and other trail facilities promptly, as a deterrent to additional vandalism. Depending on the location of the facility, resistance to vandalism should be an important criterion when selecting materials for interpretive signs and other trail-related amenities.

COMMENTS?:_____

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F) Current federal budget trends are making it increasingly difficult to meet maintenance needs for many of Montana's trails. Consequently, it is essential that managing agencies have clear priorities for the limited maintenance funds that are available. New facilities should not be built where there is no ability to maintain them. Within the broad context of the Montana trail system, there is room for a range of different maintenance standards; all trails do not need to be maintained to the high standards which may be appropriate for heavily used trails. Agencies should make sure that designated trails they have been unable to maintain are appropriately signed at the trailhead, so users have some sense of what to expect.

COMMENTS?:_____

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G) Explore contracts with corrections facilities and courts to perform trail maintenance activities as part of community service.

COMMENTS?:_____

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MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES, SPECIFIC ACTIONS, AND TIME FRAMES?:

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OTHER STRATEGIES?_____

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4) <u>ISSUE</u>: MANAGEMENT/ENFORCEMENT

COMMENTS?:_____

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<u>GOAL</u>: Ensure that the travel management processes used by agencies are fair, that all important issues are recognized, that the public has an opportunity to be involved, and that a range of travel management alternatives are considered and analyzed. Additionally, managers and users need to work together in improving enforcement of trail regulations, and reduce the need for enforcement by improving the behavior of all trail users.

COMMENTS?:_____

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<u>EXPLANATION</u>: Results from the Plan scoping process demonstrated that a portion of the trail-using public is dissatisfied with the way trails are sometimes managed. Some people, for example, feel that there should be more trail restrictions for various kinds of uses. Others feel there are too many restrictions on trail use, that the processes used to determine restrictions aren't fair or based on accurate information, or that restrictions--if they are implemented--should pertain to all users. From the perspective of managing agencies, restrictions must remain an option, and sometimes may be necessary to comply with legal mandates. Restrictions on various types of trails use may be prompted by a number of factors, including preventing or minimizing resource damage, reducing user conflicts, maintaining safety, and other reasons.

Many trail users feel that there is not sufficient enforcement of trail rules and regulations. Improved enforcement would likely make a major contribution to reducing conflicts between trail users on both urban and backcountry trails. Often, it is not so much that there are different users on a trail that creates conflict; rather, it is that there are different users who are either violating a regulation, or displaying poor judgement or ethics. As with many other trail issues, limited budgets make it impossible that the full burden of enforcement improvements can fall on agencies alone; if trail users want to see improvements in the way trail regulations are enforced, they must be willing to work closely with managers in reporting violations and problem areas.

COMMENTS?:_____

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<u>POTENTIAL STRATEGIES:</u>

A) Ensure that agency planning processes thoroughly consider alternative management options before restricting particular uses.

COMMENTS?:_____

B) Ensure that the public is involved in travel management discussions. Interested parties of all types should be notified as early as possible about what the issues are, what the decision-making process will be, and what their opportunities are for participating in the process.

COMMENTS?:_____

C) Provide better information and notification about restrictions after they occur. The rationale behind management changes should be clear, supportable, and available to the public. Signs should be posted at trailheads after a restriction occurs explaining the reasons the agency took the action. A phone number and address should also be posted so trail users know who to contact if they have questions or want more information. Agencies should also make it clear both through the information they provide and their actions that they intend to enforce restrictions once they are imposed.

COMMENTS?:_____

D) When trail use is restricted, managing agencies should try to ensure that alternative opportunities are available in the area, assuming there is sufficient demand for that type of activity.

COMMENTS?:_____

E) Trail managers should work together to ensure that processes used to implement restrictions are as consistent as possible between regions and across agencies.

COMMENTS?:_____

F) The best way to address a potential enforcement problem is to prevent it from occurring. Improved education materials and information about trail use will reduce the potential for honest mistakes. Better information will also decrease instances where users will mistakenly believe a violation has occurred.

COMMENTS?:_____

G) When violations do occur, they are much more likely to be observed by trail users than agency staff. Users need good information on proper procedures for observing and reporting a violation; sheriff and agency phone numbers, as well as comment/reporting boxes at heavily used trailheads would help address this. Better reporting will increase the likelihood the information will be helpful to investigative authorities, and reduce the chances of direct conflict between users over perceived violations. Agencies should consider establishing an 800 number for reporting trail-related violations, similar to TIPMONT for fish and game violations.

COMMENTS?:_____

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H) Some support exists for increased penalties for trail violations, particularly for repeat offenders. Fine schedules for trail violations should be examined to see if they are providing a sufficient disincentive for violators.

COMMENTS?:_____

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I) There appears to be a need for more aggressive checking of spark arrestors, and potential noise and air quality violations. Noise issues associated with motor vehicle trail use are significant in some areas. One way of ensuring compliance would be to require an inspection before stickers are issued. Random checks at trailheads is another tool which could increase compliance.

COMMENTS?:_____

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J) Motor vehicle trespass in off-limit areas (e.g., wilderness areas) was an issue frequently mentioned by trail users during the Plan scoping period. Managing agencies should encourage trail users to submit the license plate numbers of violators to authorities. Illegal construction of new trails is also an issue which needs greater enforcement attention. Motorized groups need to work with club members to educate them about these issues, and work with authorities to apprehend violators.

COMMENTS?:_____

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K) There is concern among some trail users that a significant number of snowmobile and OHV operators are failing to register their vehicles. FWP, in cooperation with the STAC, should examine this issue and--if there appears to be a significant problem--come up with a list of recommendations (e.g., more aggressive enforcement, greater publicity about the registration requirement, etc.) for improving compliance.

COMMENTS?:_____

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L) Managing agencies and user groups should jointly assess the feasibility of state legislation requiring large, easily visible license plates on all OHVs and snowmobiles.

COMMENTS?:_____

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M) Because of significant public concern about enforcement issues, trail managing agencies should devote a greater portion of their budget to this area. If it is not possible to get authority to hire more staff, contracting with qualified law enforcement officers might be an option.

COMMENTS?:_____

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N) Agencies need to develop and maintain good, standardized data bases on trail use violations, so problem areas can be targeted for additional enforcement attention and information is easy to share and compare.

COMMENTS?:_____

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O) Managing agencies need to work closely with local sheriff departments to improve understanding of trail-problems and work toward increasing checks at trailheads where there are problems.

COMMENTS?:_____

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MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES, SPECIFIC ACTIONS, AND TIME FRAMES?:

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OTHER STRATEGIES?_____

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5) <u>ISSUE</u>: FUNDING

COMMENTS?:_____

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<u>GOAL</u>: Collectively work to improve trail-related funding at all levels of government.

COMMENTS?:_____

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<u>EXPLANATION</u>: There is insufficient funding for developing and maintaining trails in Montana. FWP's State Trails Program currently has OHV and snowmobile grant programs, funded through a percentage of gas tax receipts. Another trails funding source is the National Recreational Trails Fund Act (NRTFA), which provides funding for both motorized and non-motorized trails. FWP manages distribution of the NRTFA grant money in Montana.

Montana is also the recipient of federal Enhancement dollars available through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, which can be used to fund trails related to transportation. The majority of ISTEA Enhancement dollars in Montana are distributed through the Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) to projects selected by local communities, in accordance with a memorandum of understanding between the Montana Department of Transportation, the Montana Association of Counties, and the League of Cities and Towns. In addition to the above, trail managing agencies at the federal and local levels also have their own internal funding sources for trails.

Currently, the biggest funding need is for non-motorized trails in Montana, especially those not eligible to receive ISTEA Enhancement funding. Unlike motorized users, non-motorized users lack a state-wide user fee dedicated to their type of use. The majority of Montana's non-motorized trails are managed by the USFS and National Park Service (NPS), agencies which may have less money available for trails in the future.

COMMENTS?:_____

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<u>POTENTIAL STRATEGIES</u>:

A) The Montana State Trails Advisory Committee (STAC) should continue to work on developing new and creative ways to improve funding, particularly for non-motorized trails. Possible local and state-wide options to pursue could include a mix of the following:

> 1) Develop a trails income tax checkoff, where taxpayers could elect to donate income specifically for trail-related work.

<div align="center">23</div>

2) Implement a bicycle registration/license fee, a portion of which would be dedicated to bike trail construction and maintenance.

3) Establish a general user fee program such as a state-wide trail user license, the proceeds of which would be available for trail-related work.

4) Establish a Montana Park and Ski program to help fund cross-country ski trails. Another option would be a state-wide cross-country ski pass, the proceeds from which would be used to develop and maintain ski trails.

5) Support the proposed national Fish and Wildlife Diversity Initiative, which would be funded by a tax on various types of recreational equipment. A portion of Initiative funding would be available for trails and other outdoor recreation facilities.

6) Work to ensure that ISTEA Enhancement funding is reauthorized by Congress, and that the National Recreational Trails Trust Fund receives adequate funding.

7) Establish an inter-agency network of vandal-resistant donation collection boxes at heavily used trailheads. An example of a sign message could be as follows: "A $1.00 donation for day hikers and $5.00 donation for overnight campers is suggested." Funding should go directly to the agency's trail program, or an inter-agency trails funding source.

8) Develop special public funding and marketing campaigns for work on selected, high-profile trails. Local user groups should be encouraged to lead these efforts.

9) Establish a state trails trust fund as a conduit for estate, corporate, and private donations for trails projects throughout the state. In conjunction with the trust fund, it would be useful to investigate the establishment of a state-wide non-profit foundation dedicated to the promotion of trails and possibly other related outdoor recreation issues.

10) Work to make more effective use of subdivision parkland dedications for trails. Local governments should develop a list of prioritized needs, so that when developers request subdivision review, the best use of trail-related land donations or dollars can be determined in a methodical way.

11) Develop a state-wide campaign to solicit donations for trail construction and maintenance.

12) Produce user-friendly information for local governments about various options for funding trails.

The STAC and other organizations and agencies should work together to keep trail constituents informed about the need to improve funding and possible opportunities for doing so. Unless trail users are effective in making their voices heard in the political process, chances for increased trail-related funding are poor. Hikers, in particular, are currently not well organized in Montana. The Montana State Trails Newsletter and State Trails Conference are two vehicles which might be used to discuss various funding options and encourage people to contact decision-makers.

COMMENTS?:_____

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B) As discussed under the maintenance section, the strategic use of volunteers can partially compensate for funding shortfalls for both maintenance and construction. Volunteers can also provide valuable assistance with fund raising.

COMMENTS?:_____

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C) Agencies responsible for distributing trail grants should periodically review their application procedures to make sure the information and processes are as simple and easy to understand as possible. Grant programs are of little value if many potential applicants lack the resources to complete the applications.

COMMENTS?:_____

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D) Trail managing agencies need to work harder to inform their constituents about where trail funding comes from and how it is used. A basic problem throughout many areas of government is that citizens do not see a clear connection between funding they supply through taxes and other sources, and results on the ground. It is important that managing agencies be able to effectively communicate to trail users and groups how trail funding is spent and the rationale for doing so.

COMMENTS?:_____

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MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES, SPECIFIC ACTIONS, AND TIME FRAMES?:

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OTHER STRATEGIES?_____

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6) <u>ISSUE</u>: URBAN TRAILS

COMMENTS?:_____

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<u>GOAL</u>: Develop more local trails, greenways, and trail connections for recreation and transportation in Montana's populated urban areas. Develop urban trail linkages between residences, parks and other recreational facilities, schools, historic and cultural sites, open space, shopping areas, and other important community destinations.

COMMENTS?:_____

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<u>EXPLANATION</u>: Montana is comparatively well-endowed with back-country trails, but suffers from a relative lack of trail opportunities closest to where most Montanan's live--in cities and towns. Some Montana cities are situated near large amounts of public land, but lack good trail access to the edge of town.

A number of Montana cities are actively improving their trail network, and are providing outstanding models for other towns. At the same time, however, many excellent urban trail opportunities are being lost due to development and other factors.

COMMENTS?:_____

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<u>POTENTIAL STRATEGIES</u>:

A) Potential (summer and winter) trail corridors should be integrated with local and regional land use, recreation, transportation, and utility corridor plans. Good open space planning is a key to providing an excellent urban trail system. Cities which currently don't have an open space, outdoor recreation, or trails plan (or lack the resources to produce one) may want to consider using University students in a landscape architecture, planning, geography or other relevant program to produce a plan as a class project.

COMMENTS?:_____

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B) Since many urban trail system linkages include on-street segments, bicycle and pedestrian-friendly plans need to be more actively considered and incorporated into local street and roadway designs.

COMMENTS?:_____

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C) Ensure that local governments have access to the trail planning tools and information they need to improve their trail systems. In rapidly growing areas, local governments may need to act quickly to preserve rights-of-ways for future trails, and having access to good information will increase their chances of success. Information on easements, design, maintenance, volunteers, liability, takings, rails-to-trails, trail use trends, new technology, use of utility corridors, planning, and ways of working cooperatively with developers would enhance the ability of local governments to improve their trail systems.

Managing agencies and user groups need to work together to educate developers about the value of trails (e.g., how they can increase property values and the desirability of a location). The State Trails Conference and State Trails Newsletter are valuable forums for discussing new trends and developments in urban trails. Information programs at meetings of the Montana League of Cities and Towns, the Montana Association of Counties, and other organizations would be useful. Furthermore, local public works and planning departments, chambers of commerce, and politicians need to need to be brought in more closely to the state-wide trail information network.

COMMENTS?: _____

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D) Improve working relationships between local governments and the federal agencies which manage large quantities of land surrounding many Montana cities. Better cooperation is needed to develop more connecting trails between cities and the trail networks on surrounding public land. Securing routes through the lower elevation "front" country is particularly important, as these areas are developing rapidly around a number of Montana cities. Selected memorandums of understanding (MOUs) between federal trail managers and local governments on trail coordination might be place to start.

COMMENTS?: _____

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MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES, SPECIFIC ACTIONS, AND TIME FRAMES?:

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OTHER STRATEGIES? _____

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7) ISSUE: TRAIL SUPPLY
AND SYSTEM CONFIGURATION

COMMENTS?:_____

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GOAL: Work cooperatively to retain the current system, as well as identify and complete high priority new trail opportunities and connections. Currently, there is a greater need for more new trails in urban areas than the backcountry.

Trail managing agencies at all levels of government should work with users and each other in increasing the number of loop trails and system connections, especially those providing additional medium and long-distance opportunities. Agencies should continue to work with user groups to ensure that Montana has one of the best long-distance trail systems in the country, with opportunities for all types of users.

COMMENTS?:_____

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EXPLANATION: Montana has long had a large and impressive backcountry trail system, with an improving network of urban trails. Due to budget constraints and the large size of the existing system, a substantial increase in the amount of backcountry trail mileage in the near future is unlikely. In fact, if current budget trends continue, it will be increasingly difficult to maintain the current system. With a growing number of residents and tourists, many of whom participate in trail-based recreation, maintaining the current base--as well as opening strategically located new trails and linkages--will be important to help disperse use and minimize crowding and conflicts. A key aim of the Montana State Trails Plan is maintaining and improving opportunities for all types of trail users.

The usefulness of Montana's trail system is sometimes limited by trails which don't offer an alternative return route and/or provide access to a larger network of trails. Loops and connecting trails are an excellent means for maximizing the effectiveness of Montana's existing trail system. Managing agencies must continue to work with user groups to improve long-distance trails in Montana, as these opportunities are something which many other states can not offer. Designated historical routes such as the Lewis and Clark Trail also offer the potential for longer opportunities with an interpretive theme.

COMMENTS?:_____

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POTENTIAL STRATEGIES:

A) As discussed under the "urban trails" issue, trail users and managers need to collectively work to improve the network of trails closest to where most Montanans live--in cities and towns, where only about 1 percent of Montana's trails are currently located. Managers and trail advocates need to be involved early in all plans for new roadways, developments, and utilities corridors which might provide trail potential.

COMMENTS?:_____

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B) More attention needs to be focused on providing additional trails in eastern Montana. Because of substantially less Forest Service land in eastern Montana, trail opportunities are limited. Along with the USFS, the BLM, FWP, and local governments have important roles in expanding trail opportunities in the eastern portion of the state. Additional opportunities may be available on land managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (e.g., C.M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge). Some tribal governments in eastern Montana may also be interested. Because of a greater focus on increasing tourism in the eastern portion of the state, there are opportunities for managing agencies to work closely with tourism organizations and chamber of commerce officials. In addition to eastern Montana, agency officials need to focus on other regional gaps in trail coverage, across the whole spectrum of trail uses.

COMMENTS?:_____

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C) Federal, state, and local officials should work with winter trail groups to improve funding for cross-country ski trails and grooming. Currently, cross-country skiers lack a funding mechanism to enhance opportunities commensurate with what has happened with snowmobiling (e.g., allocated fuel tax and registration receipts).

COMMENTS?:_____

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D) New trails should not be considered unless there are solid plans and funding for long-term maintenance. Simply maintaining the network of trails already in place will be a tremendous challenge for both agencies and user groups, aside from additions to the system.

COMMENTS?:_____

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E) Trail managing agencies, local governments, and user groups should utilize state-wide trail mapping as a tool to identify and assess potential connections and circuits which would

significantly improve the overall trail network. The STAC should investigate the possibility of establishing a state-wide, long-distance "backbone" trail system to ensure that key segments are identified and appropriate links and connections are made, especially to major routes such as the Continental Divide Trail. Perhaps a "10 most wanted list" could be developed annually to highlight top priority urban and rural segments in need of completion.

COMMENTS?:_____

F) Montana trail-managing agencies should work closely with each other (and their counterparts in neighboring states) to ensure that logical connections between trail systems are made across agency and/or state boundaries. A special working group could be one vehicle for helping coordinate this. In some cases, important trails which cross regional, agency, or state boundaries may require special kinds of information (e.g., a single map that has the entire trail system on it, even though it may be on land managed by several entities).

COMMENTS?:_____

G) In cooperation with the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) and other transportation authorities, local governments should strive to complete appropriate connections between various local trail systems. In some cases, wide roadway shoulders, utility corridors, or other alternatives might be used to provide trail system linkages which might not otherwise be possible. One key to doing this successfully is ensuring that there is opportunity for early input on all state, county, and city roadway and other public works projects.

COMMENTS?:_____

H) Motorized trail users riding vehicles which are not registered for road use sometimes have difficulty legally completing loops which may include a primitive road. Managing agencies should continue to investigate whether certain segments of lightly traveled roads might be opened to OHVs trying to make a connecting link. A related issue is the need for OHVs to travel short distances on roads from campgrounds to reach trails opened to motorized use. Managing agencies should examine whether state legislative changes would be helpful in addressing OHV road use issues.

COMMENTS?:_____

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MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES, SPECIFIC ACTIONS, AND TIME FRAMES?:

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OTHER STRATEGIES?_____

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8) ISSUE: RESOURCE PROTECTION

COMMENTS?:_____

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GOAL: Systematically examine, avoid and/or reduce trail-related impacts on natural and cultural resources; avoidance should be the first priority. Where appropriate, impacts should be mitigated.

COMMENTS?:_____

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EXPLANATION: Montana's trail network bisects some of the state's most spectacular natural resources. Trails also provide access to important cultural features. In more remote areas, trails may be the only access to these resources. Some of the resource concerns mentioned at the Trails Plan scoping meetings include the following: wildlife; noise and air quality; streams and fisheries; vegetation destruction; erosion; historical and archaeological features; and unauthorized trails built by trail users.

COMMENTS?:_____

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POTENTIAL STRATEGIES:

A) Public input during the Trails Plan scoping process emphasized the importance of examining environmental impacts early in the planning process, and involving the public while doing so. Various state and federal laws (e.g., the National Environmental Policy Act) typically require that agencies do this routinely. Agency staff should work to ensure they are complying with both the letter and spirit of these requirements.

COMMENTS?:_____

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B) Noxious weeds are a serious trail-related issue which has assumed a much higher profile during the past few years. Exotic weed species have become especially troubling for native vegetation and wildlife. Managing agencies should work closely with each other, volunteers, user groups, schools, 4-H groups, conservation districts, agricultural industry to effectively address this issue.

COMMENTS?:_____

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C) Education has a major role to play in addressing many environmental issues associated with trail use. Cooperation between managing agencies--and between agencies and educational institutions--is essential to improving and coordinating environmental-related education efforts.

COMMENTS?:_____

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D) A theme which emerged from public comments was that enforcement of trail regulations needs to be improved, in part to reduce environmental impacts. Illegal uses on existing trails and construction of unauthorized trails are examples of problems where improved enforcement has the potential to reduce environmental impacts. While tight agency budgets preclude hiring large numbers of new enforcement personnel, trail-managing agencies should jointly consider and discuss additional ways of improving enforcement (see discussion in management/enforcement section).

COMMENTS?:_____

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E) Proper design of trails can play a major role in reducing environmental impacts such as erosion. Inter-agency communication and mutual sharing of information is an important means for assuring that good design information gets to the agency personnel and volunteers who need it. More widespread use of inter-agency design and monitoring standards might also be helpful.

COMMENTS?:_____

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F) Working together, agencies and non-profit organizations should utilize creative tools such as conservation easements to help protect resources on private land adjacent to trail corridors. Preserving key trail viewsheds can also help promote important resource conservation goals.

COMMENTS?:_____

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G) Regular maintenance is an important factor in minimizing the environmental impacts of trails. Because of tight agency budgets, volunteers will likely need to be tapped for an increasingly important contribution to trail maintenance in Montana. To be effective, volunteers must be familiar with techniques which protect trail integrity and reduce environmental impacts. An inter-agency volunteer manual would be one way to help facilitate volunteer training.

COMMENTS?:_____

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H) Agencies should carefully monitor trail-related environmental impacts. Various procedures have been developed to categorize different resource areas, establish baseline standards, and monitor for changes over time (e.g., Recreation Opportunity Spectrum, Limits of Acceptable Change, etc.). In areas where resource impacts are significant, management changes may need to be implemented. Soil loss, vegetation damage, and other environmental (and social) factors can be monitored and managed using these techniques.

COMMENTS?:_____

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I) Agencies should work with motorized user groups to help ensure that regulation mufflers and spark arrestors are used. Agencies, user groups, and industry representatives in Montana and from throughout the country need to continue working on reducing noise and air pollution impacts from snowmobiles.

COMMENTS?:_____

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J) The integrity of sensitive resource areas and designated wilderness, in particular, must be protected from illegal and improper trail use and environmental damage. Agencies need to actively enforce existing regulations pertaining to federal Wilderness Study Areas and other roadless lands pending a final decision from Congress on the status of these areas. Good education efforts are necessary to improve self-policing by trail users in these and other areas.

COMMENTS?:_____

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MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES, SPECIFIC ACTIONS, AND TIME FRAMES?:

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OTHER STRATEGIES?_____

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9) <u>ISSUE</u>: USER COMPATIBILITY

COMMENTS?:_____

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<u>GOAL</u>: Agencies and user groups need to work cooperatively to reduce user conflicts and increase compatibility between trail users.

COMMENTS?:_____

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<u>EXPLANATION</u>: Lack of compatibility between trail uses often results when users' expectations or goals for a particular experience are not met. One way to reduce conflicts is to make sure that trail users have accurate information about what to expect on a trail (e.g., what other types of uses are permitted). On certain trails, however, conflicts may be unavoidable unless some type of management change is implemented.

COMMENTS?:_____

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<u>POTENTIAL STRATEGIES</u>:

A) Improved signing and other information materials can play an important role in reducing conflicts. If people know in advance which types of uses are allowed on a particular trail, they are less likely to experience conflicts. It is the responsibility of the managing agency to clearly indicate at every trailhead the types of uses which are permitted and prohibited. Whenever possible, the reasons for prohibiting particular uses should be explained.

COMMENTS?:_____

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B) In some situations, utilizing creative temporal solutions may help to reduce impacts of one type of trail use on another. Different kinds of trail uses can be zoned by time; in other words, certain uses may only be allowed on particular days, weeks, or months. While not an appropriate solution for all situations where there is conflict, temporal separation may be a workable compromise where most users support it.

COMMENTS?:_____

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C) Where feasible, separate trails for uses judged to be non-compatible provide an option for reducing conflicts. In some cases, separating non-compatible uses for the first several miles beyond a trailhead can reduce the chance of conflicts.

COMMENTS?:_____

D) Education about safe and courteous trail use in multiple use settings is a key means for reducing conflicts. Often, conflicts are caused by ignorance or lack of courtesy.

COMMENTS?:_____

E) Agency managers have a responsibility to try to accurately and fairly determine the severity of conflicts being reported on a particular trail before proposing a management action which restricts the use of particular users. Some suggestions include the following:

1) Complaints or suggestions from users, for example, should be accurately recorded and monitored. Trailhead boxes with comment cards are one means for encouraging user comments.

2) Managers need good data about the types of users on particular trails in order to help inform their management decisions. Making greater use of volunteers to administer surveys is one alternative to explore.

3) Restrictions on a particular kind of trail use because of conflict should be proposed only after other alternatives have been seriously examined and perhaps experimented with on a trial basis.

4) Trail managers at all levels of government should make an effort to develop understandable and defensible processes for making conflict management decisions, and be able to clearly explain the rationale behind their decision to the public.

5) Whenever possible, managers need to actively involve the trail using public both in developing general management decision-making processes, and in dealing with particular, case-by-case issues. If there is general public support and understanding of the decision-making process, there is likely to be less controversy when a particular management decision is made.

6) In cooperation with trail user groups, agency staff need to work at becoming more skilled at employing a variety of conflict resolution techniques. Courses in consensus building and other methods should be essential parts of every trail managers' continuing education; the Montana Consensus Council is one organization which may be able to provide assistance. Excellent trail management involves good people and process skills, just as much as it requires technical resource knowledge.

COMMENTS?:_____

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F) Agencies should try to utilize advisory committees composed of various user groups to address conflicts and other issues, and make recommendations to managing authorities. The STAC may be one forum for addressing issues at a state-wide level. Managers dealing with conflicts at a local or regional level are encouraged to establish advisory committees to help make consensus recommendations on how to address conflicts. The STAC may be able to play a role in helping to establish local and/or regional advisory committees.

COMMENTS?:_____

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G) Managing agencies may want to work with motorized trail users to look at the feasibility of establishing public or privately owned "parks" for high intensity motorized use, particularly near urban area. These parks would not replace motorized opportunities on public land, but they might provide better and more appropriate facilities for certain types of motorized recreation such as motocross training. Training opportunities for young riders and other types of educational programs would also be worthwhile components of these facilities.

COMMENTS?:_____

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H) Trail managers and user groups should consider planning events which enable different types of trail users (as well as non-users) to try trail activities they do not regularly participate in. The chance to try something new and interact with other types of trail users has the potential to increase appreciation for the diversity of trail modes.

COMMENTS?:_____

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MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES, SPECIFIC ACTIONS, AND TIME FRAMES?:

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OTHER STRATEGIES?_____

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10) ISSUE: RESEARCH, PLANNING, AND DESIGN

COMMENTS?:_____

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GOAL: Trail managers should jointly work towards research and data collection systems which provide timely and accurate facts about trail use, conflicts, user preferences, environmental conditions, and other important information.

Managers should work with trail users to plan and design interesting, integrated trail networks which offer access to and opportunities for a wide range of other trail-related outdoor recreation activities, in geographically varied settings.

It is recommended that resource agencies jointly prepare a state-wide plan for key linear water corridors, in order to better coordinate management and the provision of access, camp sites, and other amenities. Backcountry 4WD use is another trail-related activity which might benefit from more comprehensive planning and public information.

COMMENTS?:_____

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EXPLANATION: Excellent data collection systems are essential if trail managers are to adequately monitor environmental impacts, provide for current trail uses, and plan for the future. Agencies need to routinely share data, and devise collaborative mechanisms to increase data collection efficiency. Key elements of the data collection systems need to be simple and adaptable enough to be readily used by volunteers.

Part of the challenge for trail managers is that recreational technology is changing rapidly; types of trail uses which are unheard of today may be common in 20 years. Managers need to stay abreast of trends, monitor impacts, and--with accurate supporting information--be able to evaluate and react more quickly to new trends than they have in the past. In addition to information about changing technology and types of uses, managers need to monitor basic demographic information, to help ensure that the supply of trail resources keeps pace with demand.

Montanans want a diverse and interesting backcountry and urban trail system. Many trail users are interested in participating in other outdoor recreation activities while using trails; for some trail users, trails are a means to another end. Wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing, natural and cultural resource interpretation, camping, and photography, to name a few activities, are all closely connected to trail use for many people. Good trail design and management needs to consider the other activities which people participate in while using trails. For some trail users, simply having some kind of "destination" (e.g., scenic waterfall, a lake, historical site) at the end of the trail adds significantly to their enjoyment. In

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addition, trail layout and design can have an important impact on how interesting the trail is for users, and how easily they can engage in other activities. It is important that Montana's trail system be varied enough to enable residents and visitors to explore all of the state's environments, from alpine tundra, to river valley, to eastern Montana grasslands, to urban greenway.

In Montana, rivers are often used as linear corridors for camping and day trips, in much the same way that land-based trails are used. Similar kinds of recreational activity occurs along primitive roads with 4WD vehicles. Water corridors, in particular, are outside the scope of State Trails Plan, but water trail issues are an important issue which should be addressed under a different context.

COMMENTS?:_____

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES:

A) Agencies need to design data collection systems which provide good, current information on user preferences, participation rates, and other topics. Each trail managing agency should periodically examine how it is collecting trail use data, and determine whether the type and extent of data collection are adequate. In some instances, it may be helpful to establish baseline standards, against which changing conditions might be monitored and compared (e.g., Limits of Acceptable Change, etc.). Regular access to state-wide and national trail data is also important.

COMMENTS?:_____

B) Improve communication between trail managers throughout the state, so that key trail research and data collection results are widely disseminated across regional and agency boundaries. In addition, agency staff need to effectively communicate to the public key research and trends, so that the rationale for management decisions are more clearly understood.

COMMENTS?:_____

C) It is essential that trail users communicate to managers significant things they are observing (e.g., particular kinds of resource damage, weed infestations, overflowing parking lots, new types of uses). While managers are not in a position to change management every time they receive a comment or suggestion, frequent input from users is essential if managers are to provide and maintain an excellent trail system. Installing a comment box at more

trailheads might be one way of soliciting more user comment. Implementing a free 800 number for trail-related comments might be another option.

COMMENTS?:_____

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D) Managing agencies at all levels of government should investigate establishing a jointly-funded, state-wide trails geographic information system (GIS). The state-wide trails GIS would be a comprehensive trails data base and mapping tool, which would help improve inter-agency coordination and provide better information to trail users. Much of the data needed for the GIS has already been collected by the individual agencies; the state trails inventory compiled by the University of Montana in 1994 is another data source which could be added to the system. As part of this effort, selected abandoned trails, old logging roads, primitive roads, possible rail trails, utility corridors, and other routes should be identified, mapped, and assessed for potential future trail use in high priority areas where additional mileage or linkages are needed. Because of the importance of urban trails, local governments need to ensure that trails are well integrated into all state-wide data collection and planning efforts.

COMMENTS?:_____

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E) Montanans have a strong interest in their history and culture, and trails are often an excellent vehicle for connecting and interpreting sites (e.g., Native American, European settlement, etc.). Agency trail managers need to be more aware of the connection between trails and culture, both in terms of using historic trails for modern recreational/interpretive purposes, and using trails to interpret particular sites or events.

COMMENTS?:_____

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F) Natural resource interpretation along trails and at trailheads is not a new concept, but it may be one which could receive even more emphasis from trail managers. Wildlife viewing, for example, is a very popular activity among trail users, and well designed interpretive information can enhance the experience. Designing trails in a manner which affords trail users an opportunity to view wildlife in a non-disruptive manner is also important. Trail managers from all agencies should become familiar with FWP's Watchable Wildlife Program, and use it as a resource when considering trail-related wildlife interpretation opportunities.

COMMENTS?:_____

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G) Many trail users (both motorized and non-motorized) like a wide range of terrain types and challenges along a trail. Montana's trail managers need to work to ensure that individual trails are interesting and varied. While not all trails can or should offer something for every type of user, the system as a whole should offer opportunities for all types of users, from expert to beginner, motorized to non-motorized, developed facilities to primitive, horse use to wheel chair accessible.

COMMENTS?:_____

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H) Many trail users like to have the feeling that they have "gotten somewhere," either as part of a loop or one-way trail system. Some of the best trails are linear corridors which connect a series of interesting places or features such as overlooks, campsites, or ghost towns. In urban areas, trails can be used to connect parks, playgrounds, museums, schools, and other features which otherwise would be isolated from each other. Utilizing abandoned rail corridors for trail routes can be an excellent way to connect towns. Managers need to think of trails not only in terms of their inherent characteristics (e.g., grade, topography, surface), but as recreational and transportation routes which connect places in an interesting, safe, and enjoyable manner.

COMMENTS?:_____

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I) Montana's trail system should fully utilize the state's varied landscapes. While many users tend to focus on trails in the mountainous, western part of the state, the eastern portion of Montana affords some interesting trail opportunities, and has the potential to offer much more. Urban and backcountry trails alike can and should be a way of exposing trail users to the distinctive geographic regions of the state, fostering a greater appreciation and understanding of Montana's natural and cultural diversity. Trail managers and designers need to carefully integrate trails into the natural and cultural environment, so that resources are protected, yet part of the overall trail experience.

COMMENTS?:_____

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J) An excellent trail system is only as good as the extent to which people know about opportunities and can find them. Trail managing agencies may want to work together as well as with tourism organizations and other groups to produce information on thematic types of trail opportunities (e.g., historical trails, wildlife viewing, geology, etc.) so that people with particular kinds of trail interests know where to go.

COMMENTS?:_____

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K) Agencies and user groups should discuss the advisability of doing a future state-wide plan focused exclusively on backcountry 4WD use. This type of recreational activity is different enough from the other types of trail uses discussed in this Plan so that it may warrant some additional, in-depth analysis, in part because much 4WD use occurs on primitive roads rather than trails.

Agencies may also want to consider a special designation for certain outstanding 4WD routes of varying lengths, possibly using the BLM's "backcountry byways" model. Such routes would not involve new trails or roads, but would mainly link together existing primitive roads (where 4WD use is currently legal) in a more coherent fashion. These routes would be designed to offer a variety of user experiences, including opportunities for camping, fishing, hiking, and other activities, and would be carefully designated to minimize social and environmental impacts.

COMMENTS?:_____

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L) Montana resource management agencies should consider assembling technical and citizen advisory committees to help develop a state-wide recreational water corridor plan. The work of a currently existing River Conflict Group could also be brought into these efforts. It is recommended that Montana resource management agency staff begin a state-wide water corridor recreation plan upon completion of the State Trails Plan, if not before.

COMMENTS?:_____

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MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES, SPECIFIC ACTIONS, AND TIME FRAMES?:

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OTHER STRATEGIES?_____

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11) ISSUE: DISABLED ACCESS/TRAILS FOR ELDERLY

COMMENTS?:_____

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GOAL: A Montana trail system which offers a diversity of trail options for elderly and disabled trail users, with good information available on the opportunities.

COMMENTS?:_____

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EXPLANATION: The federal Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) has focused attention on providing opportunities for a portion of the population which previously was often not considered during facility planning. Trail managing agencies have been in the process of implementing ADA for the last several years, resulting in some notable improvements in accessibility. It is essential that managers recognize that providing for people with disabilities means more than simply making trails accessible to wheelchairs: Mobility impairment is only one of a number of types of disabilities (e.g., sight, hearing, etc.) that must be considered. A related issue is facilities for elderly people; a large, aging baby-boom population will increase the importance of planning for elderly needs in the future. It is worth noting that not all trails can or should be accessible to all users. Agencies have a degree of flexibility as to how and where they provide for disabled access.

COMMENTS?:_____

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POTENTIAL STRATEGIES:

A) Compile an inter-agency, state-wide guide to disabled/elderly accessible trail opportunities, with location maps and brief route descriptions. The guide should be available at key locations, at agency offices, and through Travel Montana.

COMMENTS?:_____

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B) Even though not all trails are suitable for the elderly or disabled, trail managers should routinely consider how to incorporate the needs of this part of the population into their trail planning. Accessible trail opportunities should be available in every portion of the state.

COMMENTS?:_____

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C) Trail managing agencies should investigate how they can more effectively sign trails that are suitable for the disabled or elderly. Users should be able to determine the degree of accessibility of a particular trail before they leave the parking lot, and not have to find out for themselves part way through that a trail that looked accessible when they started is in fact not. The type and degree of accessibility should be noted at the trailhead, and in any additional information such as brochures. Trail managers need to work closely with different groups of elderly and disabled trail users to determine what kind of information is most useful.

COMMENTS?:_____

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D) User groups and trail managers may want to work together to sponsor more special days and events oriented around trail activities for people with disabilities.

COMMENTS?:_____

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E) Managers and user groups could work to design mechanisms for estate giving and bequests from elderly trail users which would be used to help improve accessibility for older and disabled trail users. This program could be a special component of a new, statewide trails trust fund. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and similar groups should be involved.

COMMENTS?:_____

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MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES, SPECIFIC ACTIONS, AND TIME FRAMES?:

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OTHER STRATEGIES?_____

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12) ISSUE: TRAILHEADS

COMMENTS?:_____

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GOAL: A Montana trail system which is marked by a strategically located and well-designed trailhead network, in which development is appropriate to the type and volume of use.

COMMENTS?:_____

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EXPLANATION: Appropriately designed and located trailhead facilities are an essential part of Montana's urban and backcountry trail system. In general, the primary purpose of a trailhead is to provide a place where trail users can transfer from one mode of transportation to another. Trailheads are access areas, first of all, but they can also key points for disseminating trail and resource information.

COMMENTS?:_____

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POTENTIAL STRATEGIES:

A) Where appropriate, improve parking at trailheads. Vehicles occasionally have trouble turning around at trailheads, for example, especially if they are pulling a trailer. Managers need to utilize basic trailhead use data to help design turnarounds which are appropriate to the type of use (e.g., trailheads which receive heavy horse use may need more turnaround space than areas which are primarily used by hikers).

COMMENTS?:_____

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B) Work to ensure that there is sufficient data collection at sites to accurately estimate the type and amount of use. The provision of facilities such as outhouses, water, and additional parking should be solidly grounded on user data collection and use projections. In some cases, limits may be placed on specific forms of development (e.g., parking) to intentionally manage use.

COMMENTS?:_____

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C) Every trail managing agency needs to pay close attention to whether trailhead locations are properly signed from roadways. When trail users have difficulty finding a trailhead or feel a trailhead is otherwise poorly signed, they should notify the managing trail agency.

D) Accurate information about trail conditions, closures, animal problems, weed control, and permitted uses needs to be routinely posted at trailheads and kept current. Maps of the trail or trail system should also be posted and updated or replaced as necessary. Comment boxes would be useful additions to all heavily used trailheads.

COMMENTS?:

E) Managing agencies should work with users and transportation authorities to improve plowing at winter use trailheads. A pay-to-park plan or some other type of user fee could be used to help pay for plowing.

COMMENTS?:

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES, SPECIFIC ACTIONS, AND TIME FRAMES?:

OTHER STRATEGIES?

13) <u>ISSUE</u>: RAIL-TO-TRAILS, UTILITY CORRIDORS, AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

COMMENTS?:_____

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<u>GOAL</u>: Work to put in place an inter-agency mechanism which can assess the viability of potential future rail abandonments for trail use, and act quickly to preserve them. A vehicle is also needed to manage rail trails and other routes which cross local boundaries and are not located primarily on federal land. The viability of making better joint use of utility corridors for trail use needs to be investigated.

COMMENTS?:_____

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<u>EXPLANATION</u>: Across the country, there has been an explosion of interest in utilizing old rail grades for trails. Hundreds of miles of old rail bed have been converted to trail use over the last 10 years; the rails-to-trails movement has become one of the most notable trail success stories in the country. Unfortunately, Montana has lagged behind the leading rail-to-trail states, and has lost some exceptional opportunities as key rail lines have reverted to private use. Montana needs an inter-agency mechanism and funding source which can react quickly to abandonments; the window of opportunity for preserving old rail lines for public use is often very narrow. In addition to abandoned rail lines, using selected utility corridors, dike/irrigation systems, and other creative opportunities as trails offer additional options for expanding and improving Montana's trail system.

COMMENTS?:___ ._____

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<u>POTENTIAL STRATEGIES</u>:

A) As the agency responsible for multimodal transportation planning in Montana, MDT monitors rail line abandonment issues and routinely provides information to interested parties. Beyond this, however, it might be useful to establish an inter-governmental committee to periodically review and make recommendations on potential rail trails. As part of this activity, potential rail line abandonments (as well as selected utility corridors) could be periodically mapped and analyzed for possible trail use.

COMMENTS?:_____

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B) Various groups have formed around the state to address rail-trail issues at local and/or regional levels. It would be helpful for the STAC or some other group to work with these

groups and other interested parties more actively, and select representatives to form a larger steering committee or group which can deal with state-wide rail-trail issues.

COMMENTS?:_____

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C) Managing agencies and trail organizations should explore the long-term possibility of establishing a state-managed rail-trail system. While cities, counties, or federal agencies may be in a position to manage trails which fall entirely within their boundaries, longer trails passing through a number of jurisdictions may need a different kind of state-coordinated management. Successful models for this type of management exist in other states, where some rail-trails are managed as linear units of the state park system.

COMMENTS?:_____

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D) User groups, managing agencies, and other interested parties need to work together to compile, produce, and periodically update a publicly available map and descriptive information of existing and planned Montana rail trails. A joint publication with neighboring Western states might also be worth pursuing.

COMMENTS?:_____

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E) The STAC or some other trails group should consider coordinating research on the viability of making better joint use of utility corridors as trails in Montana. Assembling maps of utility corridors with trail potential would be a useful initial step.

COMMENTS?:_____

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MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES, SPECIFIC ACTIONS, AND TIME FRAMES?:

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OTHER STRATEGIES?_____

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14) <u>ISSUE</u>: LIABILITY AND SAFETY

COMMENTS?:_____

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<u>GOAL</u>: Provide users with a safe (but diverse and challenging) trail system in which liability concerns among managing agencies and private landowners are reduced.

COMMENTS?:_____

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<u>EXPLANATION</u>: Nationwide, liability and safety issues have become very important for the managers of trails and other recreational facilities. The issue affects not only trails on public lands, but also trail accesses across private land, and is critical for both urban and backcountry trails.

COMMENTS?:_____

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<u>POTENTIAL STRATEGIES</u>:

A) One aspect of the liability issue is the extent to which managing agencies provide current information about serious hazards to trail users. Agencies should consistently use the media, newsletters, trailhead information sources, and all other appropriate vehicles to make sure that trail users have access to important risk information.

Winter sports such as snowmobiling and cross-country skiing present special safety and liability concerns because of extreme weather and continuously changing trail conditions. Accurate information about avalanche conditions--such as that supplied by the avalanche warning system--is essential. Managing agencies need to work closely with winter trail users to enhance safety.

Finally, it should be made clear to trail users that unpredictable conditions can easily occur on a trail, and that they accept a certain degree of risk themselves.

COMMENTS?:_____

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B) Where crime is a concern, trail users need to know about it. Warning signs should be posted at trailheads with severe break-in problems. Agencies may want to look at volunteer monitoring or patrols in locations where there have been problems. At heavily used trailheads--particularly those near campgrounds--it may be feasible to make use of volunteer "hosts."

COMMENTS?:_____

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C) On motorized trails where excessive speeds are a problem, agencies should consider developing and posting speed limits. Dangerous curves, cliffs, and other potential hazards should be signed. Severe hazards should be systematically noted and, if possible, corrected when funding is available.

COMMENTS?:_____

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D) The importance of voluntary trail work is likely to increase in the future. Consequently, liability concerns affecting volunteers need to be thoroughly addressed to ensure that use of this critical resource can be maximized.

COMMENTS?:_____

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E) It is recommended that trail managing agencies--in cooperation with county search and rescue organizations and other entities--produce and frequently update a trails emergency services plan if one does not already exist. Response procedures and lines of authority must be clearly understood to assure rapid response to trail emergencies, particularly those that occur away from roads.

COMMENTS?:_____

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F) Trail managers and users need to work cooperatively to support legislation which limits liability to both public and private landowners along trail corridors.

COMMENTS?:_____

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MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES, SPECIFIC ACTIONS, AND TIME FRAMES?:

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OTHER STRATEGIES?_____

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15) <u>ISSUE</u>: TRAILS AND TRANSPORTATION

COMMENTS?:_____

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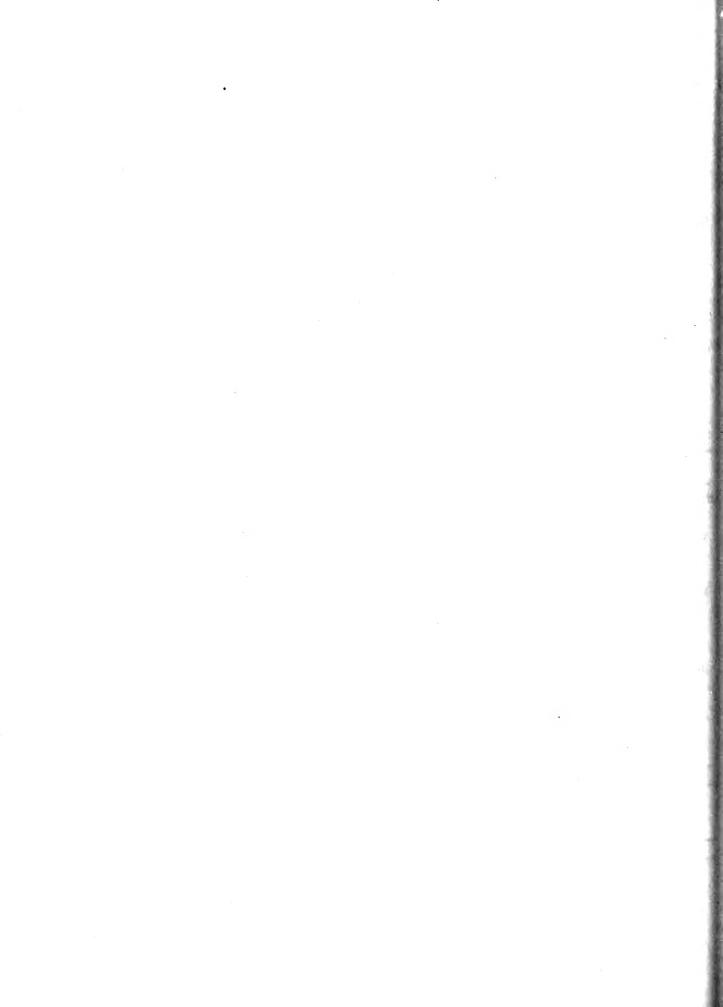**<u>GOAL</u>:** User groups, trail managing agencies, and transportation authorities need to work cooperatively to raise the profile of non-motorized transportation and improve opportunities, especially in Montana's urban areas.

COMMENTS?:_____

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<u>EXPLANATION</u>: Montana is a large state, and non-motorized transportation over vast distances is not a viable option for most people. Nonetheless, there are still significant opportunities for improving non-motorized transportation opportunities within and between Montana's communities; trails are both recreation and transportation infrastructure. The incorporation of trails along road corridors is a means for helping to connect communities, and provides an additional transportation option. Bike and pedestrian transportation provides significant personal and social benefits such as improved health, reduction of fossil fuel consumption, reduced air pollution, and diminished traffic congestion.

During the last 10 years, MDT and many local transportation agencies have begun to place more of an emphasis on making roads safer for bicyclists and pedestrians (e.g., adequate shoulders, sidewalks, rumble strips which don't interfere with cyclists, etc.). Many of Montana's major highways were reconstructed decades ago, and the present network is the result of hundreds of construction projects, completed over many years. These projects were build according to standards and policies at the time; in most cases, these standards and policies didn't take into account bicycle and pedestrian facilities because the demand for them didn't exist. More fully integrating the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians into Montana's transportation infrastructure will necessarily be an incremental process, based on the demand for these facilities, the programming of projects based on transportation demands and priorities, and the availability of transportation funding.

COMMENTS?:_____

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<u>POTENTIAL STRATEGIES</u>:

A) Trails and trail-related issues need to be fully integrated into local and state-wide transportation plans, subdivision and development plans, and comprehensive planning. There needs to be an emphasis on making streets and roads safer for bicyclists and pedestrians. Completion of a state-wide bicycle and pedestrian plan would be a valuable way to address many of these issues and continue the progress which has already been made.

One goal of the bike/pedestrian plan should be an inventory of the Montana highway system's suitability for non-motorized travel, and analysis of potential demand in various areas.

COMMENTS?:_____

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B) Trail managing agencies need to work with MDT and local transportation agencies to promote the benefits of non-motorized commuting. Good information on safe non-motorized commuting needs to be made available through a well-designed information campaign, including programs for schools.

COMMENTS?:_____

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C) Various commute trip reduction programs are options which local governments can use to help reduce traffic congestion; providing incentives for bicycle and pedestrian commuting is one option. MDT can provide technical assistance for helping design these programs.

COMMENTS?:_____

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D) Trails advocates and managers need good mechanisms to enable early review of all street, highway, bridge, and subdivision plans to assure that trail opportunities are considered before it's too late in the planning process to make changes. Where possible, trail managing agencies should investigate coordinating trailhead and other recreation improvements such as grading, paving, and signing with programmed transportation projects in the adjacent area. If MDT or a county public works department is planning a highway resurfacing project at about the same time the USFS needs work done on a trailhead parking lot, for example, it is possible that a combined project would be more economical, efficient, and better designed than if the work had been done separately. MDT and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) provide advance notice of upcoming projects through efforts such as the annual update to the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), offering an opportunity to coordinate interagency planning efforts. Transportation agencies need to work to ensure that trail planners and advocates know about these early planning coordination efforts.

COMMENTS?:_____

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MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES, SPECIFIC ACTIONS, AND TIME FRAMES?:

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OTHER STRATEGIES?_____

DRAFT PEIS ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVES

The Trails Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) is intended to assess the environmental impacts associated with the trail grant programs FWP is authorized to manage. Current programs being assessed include the National Recreational Trails Fund Act (NRTFA) and the Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Program. FWP also manages a snowmobile grant program, which will not be included in this document because it was covered in an earlier PEIS.

The NRTFA is a federal funding source which has $15 million available nationwide during each of the next two fiscal years. Montana's share is anticipated to be approximately $187,000 annually, $174,000 of which will likely be available to trail organizations and managing agencies through grants. NRTFA funding is available to fund non-motorized, motorized, and mixed use trails.

The OHV Program is funded by state OHV decal fees and 1/8 of one percent of the state gas tax. During the previous application cycle, eligible OHV trail activities included trail development, renovation, signs, certain kinds of equipment, and specified types of labor. The OHV Program will have approximately $170,000 in funding during the next application cycle, with an estimated $135,000 available for project grants.

Under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), grant programs administered by state agencies are considered to be an action requiring preparation of an EIS. This EIS is being prepared in a "programmatic" format because it evaluates the impacts of trail grant programs, rather than specific trail projects or trail systems. There is potential for additional state managed trail programs in the future (e.g., non-motorized), although none have been specifically identified or authorized at this point.

The PEIS considers issues--and alternatives that have been developed from the issues--on the basis of regional and statewide environmental effects. Individual projects funded through the trail grant programs will require separate, site-specific analysis. This analysis will be completed on a project-by-project basis, in compliance with MEPA or (on federal lands) the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

PRELIMINARY PEIS ISSUES

To date, the following preliminary list of general issue statements has been identified for analysis in the PEIS. As the PEIS is developed in more detail, mitigation strategies will be proposed for trail-related impacts which can not be avoided.

1) NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES: Construction and use of trails can result in damage to natural and cultural resources such as water quality, vegetation, soils, fish, wildlife, and historic and cultural sites.

2) SOCIAL ISSUES: Social conflicts can occur between different trail user groups utilizing the same trail. There is disagreement between some trail users on appropriate ways to manage trails to reduce social conflicts and resource impacts.

3) ECONOMICS: Some important government funding sources for trail construction and maintenance are declining. In some areas, increased reliance on volunteers will likely be necessary to maintain current trail standards.

4) TRAIL ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES: In some locations and for some user groups, the demand for trails exceeds the supply (creating crowding and conflict). There is a particular need for more urban trails, loop trails, long distance trails, and trails that provide linkages to other recreational opportunities (e.g., fishing areas, wildlife viewing, historic sites, etc.). In addition, some existing trails are not accessible due to land status. In some areas, there is a need to provide more trails for disabled persons and the elderly.

5) PLANNING, DESIGN, AND CONSTRUCTION: Planning is needed to set priorities to insure that limited funds are applied in the most beneficial manner. There is a need for improved planning and coordination between managing agencies, local governments, and other parties on trail-related issues pertaining to transportation, land use, and development, in particular. Proper design and construction of trails can help reduce environmental impacts.

6) QUALITY OF LIFE: Having an adequate supply and variety of trails in appropriate locations can result in an improved quality of life.

COMMENTS?:_____

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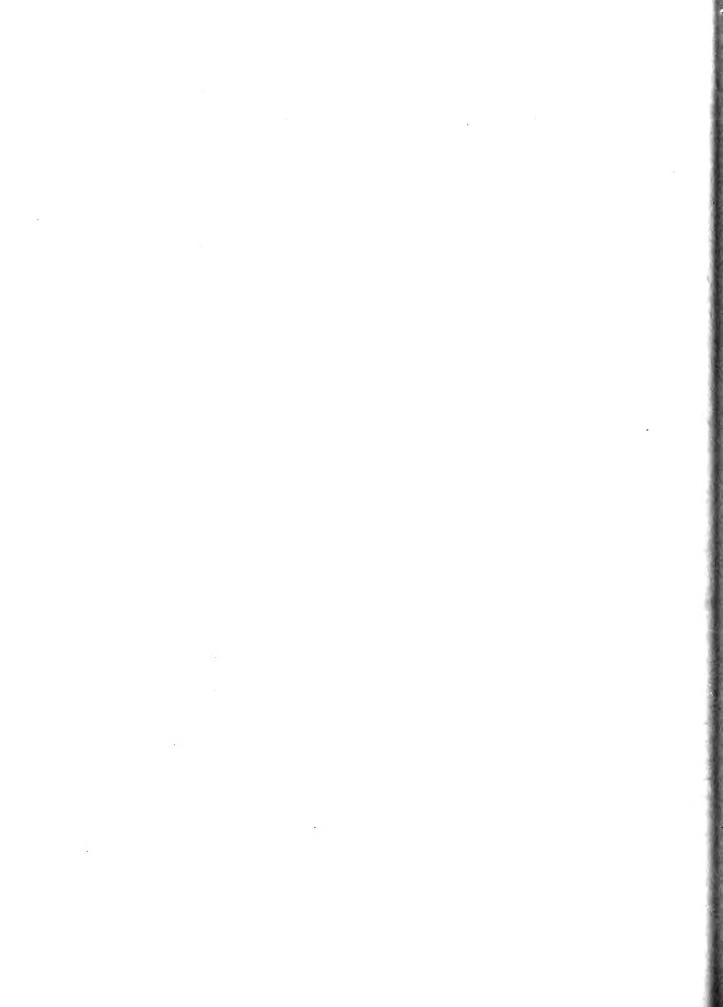_____
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DRAFT PEIS ALTERNATIVES

Listed below are the preliminary alternatives which have been identified for analysis in the Trails Grant Program PEIS. As work on the PEIS moves forward, the alternatives will be developed in much greater detail.

1) MAINTAIN CURRENT TRAIL GRANT PROGRAMS, WITH CHANGES: Under this alternative, FWP would modify the current programs to minimize or eliminate adverse socio-cultural, economic, and environmental impacts identified through PEIS research, public involvement, agency comments, and advisory committee input.

2) MAINTAIN CURRENT TRAIL GRANT PROGRAMS (NO CHANGE/NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE): Under this alternative, FWP would continue to manage the programs as it has in the past. Because management would remain the same, socio-cultural, economic, and environmental impacts would likely continue to be similar to what they have been in the past.

3) DISCONTINUE FWP TRAIL GRANT PROGRAMS: Under this alternative, FWP administration of the trail grant programs would be eliminated. This alternative assumes that the trail uses eligible for grant funding would continue, albeit without the direction and financial resources supplied by the programs.

COMMENTS?: _____

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MAJOR LONG-TERM FORCES WITH POTENTIAL TO AFFECT MONTANA TRAILS

There are a number of key factors with the potential to powerfully affect Montana's trails which can not be controlled by the State Trails Plan or PEIS. In some cases, the direction these forces take is difficult to predict. In order to be successful, the recommendations in the Plan and PEIS must be relevant and workable across a spectrum of possible outcomes in each of these areas.

Listed below are some of the driving forces which are likely to influence the quality of Montana's trails in the future. If there are other influences on Montana trails you feel are important, please list them in the space below. What types of trail-related scenarios do you feel are most likely to result from some of these forces? If you have ideas about how the Trails Plan might best account for a variety of unpredictable outcomes in each of the categories, that too would be helpful.

* **POPULATION GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT:** A growing population in Montana is likely to increase demand for trails, assuming other factors remain constant. Conversely, the development which results from population increases often makes it more difficult to secure easements and develop access points. Current forecasts indicate that Montana's population will continue to grow during the next 10 years, although not as rapidly as in the first half of the 1990s.

* **TOURISM:** Montana is currently hosting approximately 8 million out-of-state visitors per year, a dramatic increase from 10 years ago. Many of Montana's visitors visit trails, and participate in other outdoor recreation activities. Current forecasts call for the number of Montana tourists to continue increasing, although not as rapidly as in the recent past.

* **GOVERNMENT BUDGETS AND STAFFING LEVELS:** Federal government budget and staffing levels, in particular, have a substantial impact on trail planning, management, and maintenance in Montana. Current trends suggest declining budgets and staffing for federal trail-related activities.

* **MONTANA WILDERNESS LEGISLATION:** Comprehensive Montana wilderness legislation could have an important effect on Montana trails and trail use. For nearly two decades, the U.S. Congress and the Executive Branch have struggled unsuccessfully to pass legislation. Prospects for a federal Montana wilderness bill during the short-term are uncertain, as is the nature of the legislation.

* **ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION (e.g., Endangered Species Act, etc.):** The Endangered Species Act, in particular, has the potential to have an impact on the

planning and management of Montana's trails. Possible changes to the legislation, as well as the uncertain status of various species, makes it difficult to predict future impacts on trails with any degree of precision.

* CHANGES IN TRAIL TECHNOLOGY AND USE PATTERNS: The rate of technological change and innovation is increasing; the rapidity with which mountain bikes and rollerblades have become popular trail uses are an indication of how these changes effect trails. Trail managers must be in a position to react quickly to new trends in trail technology.

* SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGES: Social and cultural changes have an impact on both trail managing agencies and the recreational preference of Americans. Changing attitudes about the government, for example, influence elections, agency budgets, and policy. Because technological and socio-cultural changes can occur quickly, and interact together in ways that are difficult to predict, the only certainty is that trail use will change over time.

* ECONOMIC CHANGES: Major Montana and U.S. economic changes will affect outdoor recreation and other forms of trail use, in addition to having an impact on agency budgets. Dramatic rises in fuel prices, for example, would likely reduce the number of tourists visiting the state, and provide a disincentive for residents to travel long distances to use trails. A prolonged recession could reduce purchases of trail-related equipment. Ensuring there are ample trail opportunities close to where most Montanans live, for example, might be one way to help buffer against adverse economic trends.

COMMENTS?:_____

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APPENDIX

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND
ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE WORKBOOK

AARP: American Association of Retired Persons

ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act

ATV: All-terrain Vehicle

BLM: Bureau of Land Management

CTEP: Community Transportation Enhancement Program

EIS: Environmental Impact Statement

4WD: Four-wheel Drive Vehicle

FWP: Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks

GIS: Geographic Information Systems

ISTEA: Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act

MDT: Montana Department of Transportation

MEPA: Montana Environmental Policy Act

MOU: Memorandum of Understanding

MPO: Metropolitan Planning Organization

NEPA: National Environmental Policy Act

NPS: National Park Service

NRTFA: National Recreational Trails Fund Act

OHV: Off-highway Vehicle

PEIS: Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

STAC: State Trails Advisory Committee

STIP: Statewide Transportation Improvement Program

TIP: Transportation Improvement Program

TIPMONT: Turn in Poachers--Montana

USFS: United States Forest Service

PLANNING DEFINITIONS & EXAMPLES

VISION (def'n): An expression of where an organization would like to be (not necessarily where it expects to be) in the future. (EXAMPLE: *"The Minnesota DNR wishes to remain a leader in the development of high-quality outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities that contribute positively to the health and welfare of all Minnesotans, present and future"*.

ISSUE (def'n): A complex, potentially destructive condition involving basic policy questions or management concerns. (EXAMPLE: *"Growing urban and suburban populations have placed an undue burdon on recreational lands and facilities in the seven-county Metro Area."*)

GOAL (def'n): A timeless and non-quantifiable statement of a desired future condition. (EXAMPLE: *"Outdoor recreation opportunities must be provided in and near Minnesota's fast-growing urban population centers commensurate with fast growing public demand in these areas."*)

STRATEGY (def'n): An approach or course of action that can be used to help resolve issues and attain goals. (EXAMPLE: *"Provide increased emphasis on those recreation programs that specifically serve Metro Area residents."*)

OBJECTIVE (def'n): A statement describing specific, long-term actions or initiatives that can be undertaken (as a part of a broader strategy) to remedy problems and attain goals. (EXAMPLE: *"Public Water Access Program funding should be increased 25% over current levels through 1995 in the Metro Area."*)

ACTION (def'n): A statement detailing specific, short-term tasks including what will be done, when the activity is scheduled, and whom will be responsible for carrying out each task. (EXAMPLE: *"Public access sites will be developed in FY 94 at all priority one sites by Metro Area DNR Water Access Staff in Hennepin, Dakota, Washington and Ramsey Counties - FY 94 Bonding Authority is not to exceed $2.5 million."*)

CONCENSUS (def'n): A process whereby a group reaches substantial agreement without voting. At its worst, concensus approximates compromise. At its best, concensus can prove a win-win solution to a difficult problem. (EXAMPLE: *"The DNR has reached a general concensus with the Mille Lacs Band regarding hunting and fishing rights on lands covered by the Treaty of 1837."*)

ISSUE SELECTION CRITERIA

1. What makes this an issue? Are there other closely related issues or sub-issues that should also be addressed?

2. What are the consequences of <u>not</u> addressing this issue?

3. Has this issue been identified or addressed elsewhere?

4. Is this issue a high priority according to research reports and public opinion polls?

5. Does this issue have interdisciplinary implications or interagency dimensions?

6. How geographically widespread and pervasive is this issue?

7. Is this issue politically divisive or controversial in nature?

8. Do we wish to assume a leadership position on this issue?

9. Can we realistically address this issue with available staff and budget resources, and given existing information and current technology?

10. Is this the most appropriate or advantageous time to address this issue?

WHAT IS AN "OBJECTIVE"

An Objective Is:

- ☐ A written statement of intent.

- ☐ A measurable goal, target or quota to be achieved by a specified time, at a specified cost, and with responsibility pinpointed.

- ☐ About ends; not about means to achieve a desired result.

Characteristics Of Good Objectives:

- ☐ They are REASONABLE and ATTAINABLE, but require EFFORT to reach.

- ☐ They specify TIME LIMITS.

- ☐ They are expressed in MEASURABLE terms.

- ☐ They are stated SIMPLY and CLEARLY.

- ☐ They are ACCEPTABLE and MEANINGFUL to members of the organization.

- ☐ They are REALISTIC and RELATED TO GOALS.

- ☐ They are MUTUALLY CONSISTENT and COMPATIBLE with other organizational objectives.

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Updated - February 2, 1994